

DRAFT
Public Participation Plan
For
Bishop Area Access & Circulation Study



June 24, 2003



California Department of Transportation
District 9
500 South Main Street
Bishop, CA 93514
Contact: Forest Becket (760)-872-0735
forest_becket@dot.ca.gov

Preface

This public participation plan is meant to be a **living document** oriented at serving this particular project. Through ongoing input and evaluation, changes may be made throughout the life of the project to address the plan's effectiveness. The following are the guiding principles for public participation efforts:

1. Adhere to Democratic Principles
2. Maintain Continuous Contact
3. Provide Active Outreach
4. Focus Participation on Decisions
5. Use a Variety of Public Involvement Techniques

Introduction

The Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and its predecessor, the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act stress the role of public participation in the transportation decision-making process. The Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (1994), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration Interim Policy on public involvement, and a host of other federal laws and regulations all require public involvement in transportation decision making.

Caltrans' policy also requires that the delivery of transportation programs be consistent with the requirements of these relevant laws, including Environmental Justice requirements to involve all constituents as a precondition to using federal funds for transportation improvements. Caltrans supports a balanced representation of all stakeholders in the planning process and considers it a good planning practice to seek out and consider the needs of all stakeholders, especially those that are traditionally underserved.

The greater emphasis that is being placed on the need for more public involvement is borne from the realization that there are tangible benefits to this inclusive planning practice as well as a recognition of fairness and equity. A public that is well informed regarding the transportation decision-making system and processes can be a more effective partner in shaping California's transportation future. Including the public early in the planning process is likely to result in the following:

1. *Increased credibility*
2. *Greater public support and trust*
3. *Projects that better reflect the interest and needs of the community*
4. *More efficient use of public resources in the future because projects will move forward smoothly, with less need for re-evaluation*

Project Background

The concept of an alternate US 395 Highway alignment and potential connection to US 6 Highway, that avoids downtown Bishop has been around for over 40 years. To study the possibilities of such a project, the Division of Highways completed a Bishop Freeway Study in 1966. This concept has more recently resurfaced and been identified in the 1993 City of Bishop General Plan, 2001 Inyo County General Plan, 2001 Inyo County Regional Transportation Plan and associated Overall Work Program. The need to further address Bishop Main Street has become compounded with the removal of some on-street parking in 1994 in order to add a center turn lane to address safety concerns, the increase in interregional truck traffic, and the need to improve airport access from town.

The need to initiate addressing downtown traffic congestion and the associated impacts on the community and business environment has lead the City of Bishop to request the Inyo County Local Transportation Commission (LTC) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans, District 9) to begin work on a Bishop Alternate Route Study. In October of 2002 Inyo County LTC submitted a completed and signed Caltrans Project Proposal Form to initiate the study. In February of 2003 Caltrans, City of Bishop, Inyo County staff and representatives met to discuss the approach of the study. It was decided to prepare the study as a Project Study Report (PSR), in order to streamline the potential for further programming of projects from the study.

Study/Project Overview

As identified in the Project Proposal and to be further refined in the Project Study, the basic Purpose and Need is to:

- Reduce vehicular and truck traffic congestion on US 395 in the Bishop area between Schober Lane and Barlow Lane.
- Create a more livable/walkable community in the downtown Bishop area.
- Improve safety to traffic, bicyclists and pedestrians along the US 395 corridor in the Bishop area.
- Improve ground access to the Bishop Airport.

Goal and Objectives for this Public Participation Plan

GOAL: To efficiently maximize diverse public participation throughout the life of the study and ensure collaborative input, facilitate community vesting, and maintain viable tracking and evaluation of such efforts.

OBJECTIVES:

- Early and continuous stakeholder and public involvement in refining the scope of the study.
- Assist in building consensus on the study. Consensus in the sense that all groups and individuals can live with a proposal, with given compromise.

- Enhance the development of a collaborative effort between the public, Inyo County Local Transportation Commission, City of Bishop, Caltrans, and other affected entities.
- Increase the level and quality of public involvement.
- Ensure consideration is given to the full gamut of community concerns.
- Be a tool for tracking, documenting, and evaluating public participation/outreach efforts.

List of Involved and Affected Stakeholders

A list of interested individuals will be developed through solicitation at public meetings and from media releases, flyers, etc. This list may include the names, street addresses, phone numbers, and or email addresses depending on the preferred notification method selected by that person. This information will not be released to the general public, but may be made available to Caltrans, Inyo County, and City of Bishop staff for the sole purpose of public notification and project updates.

For the Bishop Alternate Route Study the following groups have been identified:

<u><i>Key Agency Participation</i></u>
Inyo County Local Transportation Commission
City of Bishop
Inyo County
California Department of Transportation
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
Bishop Paiute Tribe
Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce

<u><i>Other Potential Entities</i></u>
California Highway Patrol
Bishop Volunteer Fire Department
Bishop City Police Department
Inyo County Sheriffs Department
Bishop Airport
Bishop Area School Districts
Resource & Regulatory Management Agencies (i.e. Fish and Game, BLM, Forest Service, etc.)
Emergency Response (ambulance service) & Northern Inyo Hospital
American Automobile Association (AAA)
Tour Bus Industry
American Trucking Association
Local Non-Profit and/or Community Based Organizations(i.e. IMACA, IMAAA, IMAH, etc.)

<u>Other Stakeholders</u>
Bishop Area Residents
Traveling Public
Bishop Business Owners
Special Interest / Civic Groups

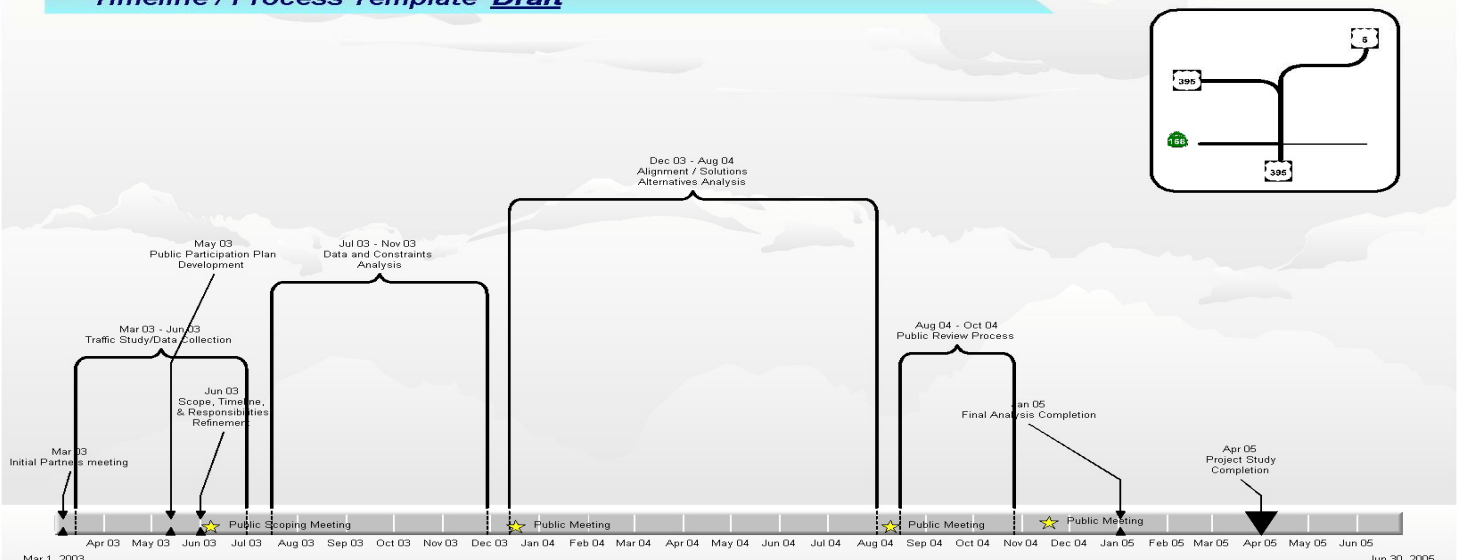
<u>Local Environmental Justice and Special Needs Populations such as:</u>
Native American
Latino
Low Income
Disabled
Elderly

General Approach

- Caltrans sponsored public meetings will be held with sufficient notification to all parties (minimum 14 day notification, if possible). In order to continually improve the quality and quantity of participation, these meetings will be continually evaluated for their effectiveness, with changes made as necessary to such things as location, meeting format, and notification methods.
- The frequency of public meetings should correspond with key points of progress in the study, such as decisions and milestones. An example of public meeting frequency (indicated with yellow stars) and study timeline is attached below. Depending on further input, the frequency of full-blown public meetings may increase or decrease.

Bishop Area Access & Circulation Study Timeline / Process Template Draft

Tuesday, June 24,
2003



- Project development team meetings, which involve key affected entity participation, will occur periodically throughout the project. Other special meetings may be held with impacted agencies, groups, and individuals. These meetings will not be open public meetings, but decisions/conclusions that are the result of these meetings will be reported at the next public meeting.
- Background information, how studies are performed and projects developed, concepts, and decisions should all be presented in such a way that the public can clearly understand them.
- All facilities used for public meetings will be chosen with ADA compliance/accessibility in mind. Other special accommodations will be made available for these meetings upon request.
- Appropriate local events will be utilized for further outreach with information/displays on hand to solicit public interest and input.
- Information on the progress of the study will be disseminated using those methods preferred by interested individuals and entities. Such methods may include:
Mail: Brochures, newsletters, and flyers
Email: Electronic flyer or notification
Fax: Flyer or notification
Web Page: Post updated flyers, notices, etc. on Caltrans District 9 Home Page
Media: Newspaper articles, press releases, local television interviews/announcements
Other: Community progress bulletins.
- Meeting notifications will go out directly to those people that are on the contact list for this study. The general public will be informed at the same time through local media and bulletins. These combined methods may include:
Mail: Flyers and announcements
Email: Electronic flyers and announcements
Fax: Flyer and announcements
Web Page: Posting on Caltrans District 9 Home Page
Media: Public Service announcements on local radio (KDAY, KBOV/KBIS) and newspaper (Inyo Register)
Other: Community bulletins (strategically located as appropriate)

Specific Strategies and Approaches

NOTE: As with much of this document, changes, additions, and alterations need to be made in order to customize this plan to meet the needs of the particular project and stakeholders. This can only be accomplished with significant input from all stakeholders. This is particularly important to the development of the specific strategies and approaches. These are the tools, techniques, and methods which will channel the who, what, when, where, and how of information dissemination and participation. The following is a list of potential strategies and approaches.

- **Public Information Material**

- Web site (Caltrans District 9 home page link: www.dot.ca.gov/dist9/) with meeting announcements, study progress updates, potential displays of data and analysis, and comment box.
- Brochures or flyers mailed out and available at various public locations with information on project status (every 6 months or at major milestones).
- Press releases in local newspapers and radio announcing public meetings, along with meeting notices mailed out directly to individuals that sign up on the contact list.
- Two project information mass mailings to all Bishop Area Residence. The first just before the second public meeting and beginning of the alternative analysis phase. The second just before the last public meeting and end of public review process. Area resident lists will be provided by the City of Bishop and Inyo County.
- Final report summary will be mailed out upon project study completion. Highlights of this report will be disseminated through local media.

- **Drop in Center (agreed upon tool)**

A common ground place like the Bishop Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center, Bishop Library, or City Hall could have a small display corner with information on the study, contacts, brochures, etc. It would be staffed periodically with knowledgeable Caltrans staff to answer questions and take input.

- **Potential Special Group Formations (still just potential, with one confirmed addition)**

- A special mailing/survey should be mailed out to all Bishop Main Street Businesses. It is additionally recommended that a special group be formed to solicit participation from the business owners.
- Citizens Advisory Committee: Representative group of stakeholders that meets regularly.
- Collaborative Task Force: A group assigned to specific task with limited time to reach a conclusion on a difficult issue.
- Focus Groups: A tool to gauge public opinion. A small group discussion, with professional leadership, on a single topic.

- **Meeting Types**

- Public Meetings: Present information to the public and obtain informal input (format used for first public meeting).
- Public Hearings: More of a formal/legal required forum to record comments and concerns (may be required at the end of the study).
- Open House/Forums: An informal setting with no set agenda, but involves exhibits and one on one discussions with staff (may be utilized to display data and analysis).

- Workshops: Task-oriented meeting organized around a particular topic or activity (there will definitely be one public workshop oriented towards solution analysis).
 - Face to Face Meetings: Direct two-way communication (will be utilized with specific groups and entities).
 - Computer-Based Polling: Electronic audience response systems that generate real time survey results through dynamic public participation (trying to obtain these services for one meeting)
- **Preferred Meeting Times and Days**
 Times: The most optimal time for having public meetings is suggested as 7 – 9 p.m.
 Days: The most optimal days for having public meetings are suggested as Wednesdays & Thursdays (midweek).
- **Suggested Bishop Meeting Facilities (Facility used will have to work with the type of meeting being held)**
 - City Council Chambers (1st Public Meeting held here on 6/26/03)
 - Senior Center
 - DWP Conference Room
 - Elks Lodge
 - Charley Brown Auditorium
 - Bishop Elementary School Multipurpose Room
- **Special Presentations**
 - The scope and approach of the study will be presented to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors and the Bishop City Council shortly after the first public meeting.
 - Study update presentations will be made to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors and Bishop City Council when major milestones are reached, or no less than six months.
- **Consultant Services**
 Consultant Services that are already contracted for with Caltrans are being sought to assist with certain aspects of this public participation effort. Such services may entail assistance with publication development, mass mailings, special workshop developments and facilitation, and polling/survey technology enhancement.

Monitor and Evaluate

This public participation plan will need to be continually monitored and evaluated for its effectiveness, with adjustments and corrections made as necessary. This will take place through input gathered at meetings, surveys, and the identification of obvious deficiencies. Changes to and refining of the Public Participation Plan are expected and will take place over the life of the Bishop Alternate Route Study.

Types of changes that may be expected:

- Changes in the way that public notification is accomplished.
- Additions and/or deletions from the notification list.

- Changes in types or numbers of public meetings.
- Addition of public involvement and notification methods that have not been specifically identified within this document.

Documentation

All comments and concerns received will be documented and made available. Attendance and perception of effectiveness at public meetings will be documented and attached to this document as appendixes. Survey results will be compiled into summaries and graphs and also attached as appendixes to this document. A final report will be prepared at the completion of the study to document the dates, events, and main areas of concern compiled and addressed throughout the public participation process of this study.

Comments will be handled as follows:

- Document comments, successes, and deficiencies after each public meeting.
- Respond as appropriate to comments received at meetings and through other formats (within 30 days).
- All comments will be documented, compiled, displayed, and made part of the final product.
- All comments and suggestions will be considered in the scoping of the study, with changes made to the scope and methods throughout the study as necessary.